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### Children's Health Initiatives

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August 7, 2012

Janette Casillas  
Executive Director  
Managed Risk Medical Insurance Board  
P.O. Box 2769  
Sacramento, CA 95814

RE: Initial Comments on Draft Healthy Families Transition Plan to Medi-Cal

Dear Ms. Casillas,

The Los Angeles County Department of Public Health's Children's Health Outreach Initiatives (CHOI) Program administers contracts with community-based agencies, cities and schools to expand health coverage for children in Los Angeles County. These contracted agencies conduct outreach in the community and provide comprehensive health coverage enrollment services to uninsured families. Agencies not only assist clients with applications for Medi-Cal, Healthy Families, Healthy Kids and other low- and no-cost coverage programs, but also troubleshoot application problems and help clients with difficulties utilizing their program benefits.

CHOI respectfully submits the following comments, questions and suggestions with regard to the initial draft transition plan of Healthy Families subscribers to Medi-Cal:

**Communicate to media and enrollment community that the Healthy Families Program remains OPEN**  
Our contracted agencies have been informed numerous times over the last two months that Spanish-language television and radio, particularly Univision, has been stating on air that the Healthy Families Program (HFP) has been cut, and it is now closed. These families' calls to our agencies are frantic, full of concern that their child's health insurance has been eliminated and wondering in some cases if they should cancel or postpone their child's surgery for fear that if they are no longer covered, they cannot afford to pay out-of-pocket.

**MRMIB must immediately disseminate clear information to the media and enrollment entity/certified application assistant (CAA) networks that HFP remains open and current subscribers will retain insurance coverage. MRMIB should immediately send press releases, in both English and Spanish (at a minimum) to the media to clarify this information. The information also needs to be posted prominently on the MRMIB and HFP websites, and a fact sheet should be developed (in both English and Spanish) and posted on the website and disseminated to CAA networks, as well as included in CAA newsletters.**

**Coordination with Health Plans:**

CHOI looks forward to gaining further clarification and concrete next steps, including timelines regarding the Health Plan Network Analysis (for medical, dental and vision plans). How will MRMIB and DHCS work with health plans to assess network overlap and determine if providers in the Medi-Cal plans are willing to accept new patients? How will this assessment be coordinated to ensure that providers are responsive?

With regard to possible enrollment caps by Medi-Cal providers, DPH would like to recommend that DHCS provide an extra incentive/s to Medi-Cal providers who do not institute enrollment caps and remain open to accepting former Healthy Families subscribers. Such incentives may include priority assistance with conversion to Electronic Health Records (EHR), and the ensuing incentives that accompany EHR conversion. MRMIB must work closely with DHCS must ensure that as many Medi-Cal providers as possible are open to and will accept the newly transitioned HFP children. If results from this network analysis show gaps in Medi-Cal providers accepting new patients, both agencies must develop a contingency plan to ensure that children have a Medi-Cal provider that is accessible and that continuity of care is not lost.

**Dental Coverage Transition in Los Angeles County:**

While CHOI anticipates receiving more detailed information on MRMIB/DHCS's process with Maximus to transition Los Angeles County HFP children into Medi-Cal dental plans, we would like to strongly suggest that Los Angeles County families are educated and made fully aware that they have the option to choose Medi-Cal fee-for-service dental care once they are enrolled in a Medi-Cal Managed Care dental plan. Data from the California Health Care Foundation shows that only 23% of Los Angeles County children enrolled in a Medi-Cal dental plan visited a dentist in 2011. With dental care utilization being a top priority for all children, it is imperative that these new Medi-Cal subscribers are clearly informed that they have a choice to remain in dental managed care, or seek out a fee-for-service Medi-Cal dental provider.

**Communication with Local Department of Public Social Services (DPSS)**

The local DPSS offices in Los Angeles County will be receiving over 220,000 new Medi-Cal cases as the result of the transition. CHOI agencies work closely with our local DPSS district offices to help families obtain and retain M/C benefits and services. For the sake of the HFP families, and to help families understand the transition of the oversight of their health coverage, HFP families must be clearly informed of new contact information for their new eligibility worker/s. This transition will be confusing and frustrating to clients unfamiliar with communicating with public social service offices. With this in mind, CHOI would recommend developing messaging not only for transitioning families but training materials (or informational fact sheets) for DPSS eligibility workers to understand the HFP clientele, how they previously obtained customer service in HFP and how their premium payments structure and processes will change.

**Mental Health Service Transition**

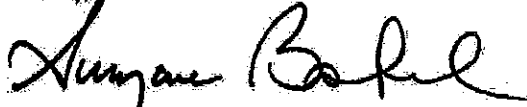
MRMIB and DHCS should provide stakeholders a detailed transition plan for HFP subscribers who will now be receiving their services through county Departments of Mental Health (DMH). How will service delivery change? How will patient histories and charts be transitioned to provide the best continuity of care? How will MRMIB/DHCS ensure that each county DMH is prepared for the caseload of children? MRMIB, DHCS and the County DMHs must coordinate with regard to communicating with families, ensuring the smooth transition of mental health care providers and handling questions and grievances with the transition and utilizing services.

Call Center Response

CHOI appreciates the draft responses from Maximus regarding anticipated questions that the HFP Call Center may receive on the transition. CHOI would recommend that all families whose children are uninsured and are not certain if they should still apply are *immediately* told that HFP remains open and are encouraged to apply. Information about the shift of HFP to Medi-Cal is important, but can be complex and should be added at the end of the conversation script rather than right at the beginning. The first response from the Call Center respondent should be a definitive and clear "yes, HFP is still open for new enrollment, and we encourage you to apply".

We look forward to receiving further details on the transition and future opportunities to provide comment. Please feel free to contact me at 213-637-8482, [sbostwick@ph.lacounty.gov](mailto:sbostwick@ph.lacounty.gov) if you have any questions about these comments or would like to discuss further. Thank you for your time and consideration.

Sincerely,



Suzanne Bostwick, Director  
Children's Health Outreach Initiatives

C: Managed Risk Medical Insurance Board Members:

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